

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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Will Good People of All Churches Be Saved?

Occasionally we hear the statement made that "there are good people in every church" (referring to the various denominations), and the inference is that such people will be saved. Because this is such a widespread belief, it deserves consideration in the light of the Scriptures.

How do we approach this question? If we approach it strictly from an **emotional** standpoint, we will most likely readily concur. After all, no concerned individual cherishes the thought of anyone being lost in torment. We, almost universally, want to believe that our friends and loved ones, regardless of church affiliation, are saved. However, if we approach the question **scripturally**, and rationally, we are likely to reach some startling conclusions.

First, **why** are people lost? Isaiah wrote: "*But your **iniquities** have separated between you and your God, and **your sins** have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*" (Isa. 59:2). Hence, sin separates man from God. But **who** has sinned? The apostle Paul said: "*For **all have sinned** and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). So the fact is that since "*all have sinned*," then not one of us will be saved because we are "good!" People, who are saved, are saved, not because they are "good," but in spite of the fact that they are bad!

Get the point? A person, who was never lost, can't be saved. How can you save one who is not lost. Can you save a man from drowning before he ever comes into contact with water? Can you heal a person of pneumonia who has never contacted the disease? So the very fact that people are saved presupposes the fact that they were once lost. One who has reached "the age of accountability," veered off into sin, is under "*the power of darkness*" (Col. 1:13), and is in servitude to the devil himself (John 8:44), the one whose influence led him into sin and consequently into condemnation.

How can such a person be saved? Clearly, there has to be a change of spiritual

relationship. There is only one remedy in all the world which will take away sin and change one's relationship from that of a sinner to that of a Christian, and that, my friend, is **the blood** of Christ (Heb. 9:14). No, the blood of animals could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4). Isaiah pictured the Messiah Who "*was wounded for our transgressions,*" and said "*the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*" (Isa. 53:5-6). John, the apostle, wrote of Christ as being the "*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev. 13:8). John the baptizer was right when he bore witness that Jesus is "*the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world*" (John 1:29). Hence, Jesus said, "*this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26:28). Paul wrote that "*we have redemption through His **blood**...*" (Eph. 2:7).

How does one contact the redeeming blood of Jesus? On the day of Pentecost the people heard the gospel proclaimed; they believed, repented, and were baptized (Acts 2:22-41). Their baptism was "*for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). Hence, there must be some connection between baptism and the blood of Christ. Indeed, there is! We are "*baptized into his **death***" (Rom. 6:3, and Christ's blood was shed in His death (John 19:34). Therefore, when we are scripturally baptized, we reach the death of Christ whereby we contact His blood, and when we reach His blood we obtain "*redemption through His blood*" (Eph. 1:7). This same act of obedience also results in our being "*added*" by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47), which "*was purchased*" by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), and which is the "*one body*" (Eph. 1:22-23), wherein we are reconciled unto God (Eph. 2:16).

Now, we again ask, "will good people of all churches be saved?" Let us think carefully. One can be a member of many churches **without** even believing in the divinity and deity of Jesus Christ — let alone without coming into contact with His blood! Will people in those churches be saved. Cf. John 8:24. Friend, you know the answer! Hence, this removes some churches from the list of "all churches." Consider further. Before one can be scripturally baptized, he must have been scripturally taught (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). Yet many churches "baptize" infants who could not possibly have been scripturally taught. Such persons become "church members" without ever having reached the blood of Jesus Christ. Are people of **those** churches saved? Thus, some more churches are removed from the "all churches" list. Scriptural baptism has to be by **immersion** and for the right purpose, i.e. "*for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). But most churches refuse to baptize for this purpose, whereas others practice sprinkling and pouring which they mistakenly call "baptism." Hence, more churches are removed from the "all churches" list. A goodly number of churches have resurrected ordinances from Moses' law and added these to the worship (i.e. the burning of incense, instrumental music in worship, Sabbath observance, etc., etc.) However, Paul taught that when members (even of the Lord's church) seek justification by the law, they are "*fallen from grace*" (Gal. 5:4). Can one be "*fallen from grace*" and saved simultaneously? Friend, we could go on indefinitely. But let us get back to the Bible.

The apostle Paul said the church is "*the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (Eph. 1:22-23), and he further said there is "*one body,*" which is the church (Eph. 4:4), over which Jesus reigns as head (Col. 1:18). If as many as one sinner could be saved while

remaining outside the New Testament church, then how could the New Testament church be the “fulness” of Christ? It was to this body that the “*saved*” were “added” (Acts 2:47). There is no indication in the Bible that the Lord in the gospel age ever added one person to any religious body except the “*one body*” which is the “*fulness*” of Christ. Reconciliation unto God is in the “*one body*” (Eph. 2:16). There is a vast difference between “*one body*” and two bodies — let alone many hundred of different and differing religious bodies. Friend, eternity is too long, and your soul is too important, for you to jeopardize its safety by your being a member of a religious “*plant*” which was built by man, and which will be uprooted in that last day. Cf. Matt. 15:13. Consider ye well!

*** —B. Witherington